Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 189251

FOR AMBASSADOR YOUNG FROM UNA

FOLLOWING REPEAT BONN 13605 ACTION SECSTATE
INFO NAIROBI JUL 25.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 13605

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, UG, GW, US
SUBJECT: UGANDA: CONSULTATIONS WITH FRG AMBASSADOR TO KAMPALA

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE FRG AMBASSADOR TO UGANDA IS HOPEFUL THAT THE INTERNAL STABILITY AND THE DECREASE IN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WHICH HAVE CHARACTERIZED THE LAST 12 MONTHS IN UGANDA WILL CONTINUE. A WORSENING OF THE INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLE BETWEEN AMIN AND THE "NUBIANS," LED BY FORMER VICE PRESIDENT MUSTAFA, COULD, HOWEVER, ENDANGER PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT. THE FRG AMBASSADOR FORESEES NO DANGER TO US CITIZENS IN THE NEAR FUTURE, BUT REITERATES HIS RECOMMENDATION THAT, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, AMERICANS WORKING IN UGANDA BE CONFIDENTIAL

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WITHDRAWN AND REPLACED WITH OTHER FOREIGN NATIONALS. AMIN WANTS TO IMPROVE CONTACTS WITH THE WEST AS A COUNTER-BALANCE TO SOVIET INFLUENCE. IN HIS ONLY CAUTIONARY NOTE, THE AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT HIS INFLUENCE WITH AMIN MAY DECLINE AS ONGOING FRG AID PROGRAMS ARE PHASED OUT LATER THIS YEAR. END SUMMARY.

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1. ON JULY 24, EMBOFFS MET WITH FRG AMBASSADOR TO UGANDA FROEWIS, WHO WAS IN BONN WHILE ON HOME LEAVE. (FROEWIS RETURNS TO UGANDA LATER THIS WEEK.) FROEWIS NOTED THAT THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN UGANDA HAD BEEN RELATIVELY QUIET SINCE JULY, 1977. THERE HAD, FOR EXAMPLE, BEEN NO MASS ARRESTS NOR SIGNIFICANT KILLINGS IN THE LAST YEAR AND HE CONCLUDED THAT BY AFRICAN STANDARDS THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN UGANDA HAD BECOME QUITE GOOD. GIVEN THIS CHANGED CLIMATE, HE WAS SOMEWHAT PERPLEXED BY THE TIMING OF THE US CONGRESSIONAL DISCUSSIONS ON UGANDA. WHILE HE UNDER-STOOD THE DOMESTIC FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE DEBATE, HE FOUND IT SURPRISING THAT THE MESSAGE FROM THE US WAS "STOP THE CARNAGE NOW" WHEN THAT CARNAGE HAD IN FACT TERMINATED A YEAR EARLIER. FROEWIS WONDERED WHY THE US, WHICH HAD CONDEMNED AMIN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE PAST, DID NOT NOTE THE IMPROVED SITUATION IN UGANDA.

2. FROEWIS OBSERVED THAT SECURITY CONDITIONS IN UGANDA HAD RELAXED NOTICEABLY IN RECENT MONTHS. THIS WAS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE FACT THAT AMIN FELT MUCH SAFER THAN HE HAD PREVIOUSLY. ANOTHER FACTOR, WHICH WAS MORE DIFFICULT TO QUANTIFY, WAS THE EFFECT THAT FOREIGN CRITICISM HAD HAD ON THE UGANDAN REGIME. HE NOTED THAT, CONFIDENTIAL

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IN AN ATTEMPT TO FEND OFF WESTERN CRITICISM, THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAD DEVELOPED A THEME OF "PEACE AND RECONCILIATION." ACCORDING TO FROEWIS, ELEMENTS IN THE UGANDAN GOVERNMENT SINCERELY HOPED THAT THIS THEME CAN BE CARRIED OUT.

3. FROEWIS NOTED THAT FOR THE PAST FOUR MONTHS THERE HAS BEEN A POWER STRUGGLE GOING ON WITHIN THE UGANDAN GOVERNMENT, PITTING AMIN AGAINST THE SO-CALLED "NUBIAN GROUP," LED BY FORMER VICE PRESIDENT MUSTAFA. AMIN HAD BEEN RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL IN REDUCING THE INFLUENCE OF THIS GROUP. THE ONLY INDIVIDUAL TOO INFLUENTIAL FOR HIM TO BUDGE THUS FAR HAS BEEN MOSES ALI, WHO STILL COMMANDS SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT FROM THE ARMED FORCES. FROEWIS THOUGHT THAT IF THIS INTERNECINE FIGHTING CAN BE RESOLVED WITHOUT BLOODSHED IT WILL SIGNAL THAT UGANDA HAS RETURNED TO WHAT MIGHT BE CON-SIDERED NORMAL AFRICAN STANDARDS.

4. IN FROEWIS' VIEW, THE PERIOD OF GREATEST OPPORTUNITY FOR RENEWED WESTERN INFLUENCE IN UGANDA HAD BEEN FROM JANUARY (AS EVIDENCED BY AMIN'S NEW YORK SPEECH) TO MAY

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(WHEN AMIN ONCE AGAIN CRITICIZED WESTERN IMPERIALISM IN AFRICA). DURING THAT TIME, AMIN HAD ADOPTED A CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WEST. HE HAD, HOWEVER, BEEN IRRITATED BY THE ABSENCE OF A RESPONSE TO HIS OVERTURES AND HAD RECENTLY BECOME MORE CRITICAL AGAIN. NEVERTHELESS, FROEWIS BELIEVED AMIN CONTINUED TO PURSUE A MORE MODERATE POLICY VIS-A-VIS THE WEST THAN HAD BEEN THE CASE IN EARLIER YEARS. ILLUSTRATIVE OF THIS WAS THE FACT THAT AMIN HAD NOT REACTED TO THE HOUSE DEBATE.

5. IN FROEWIS' VIEW AMIN STILL NEEDS THE SOVIET UNION FOR THE ARMS IT CAN PROVIDE BUT HE DOES NOT TRUST MOSCOW. FOR THIS REASON, AMIN HAD ATTEMPTED TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH HIS NEIGHBORS AND WITH THE WEST. AMIN HAD MADE A CONFIDENTIAL

CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO SMOOTH OVER PROBLEMS WITH KENYA, THE SUDAN AND RWANDA. HIS ATTEMPTS TO DO THE SAME WITH TANZANIA WERE APPARENTLY BEING IGNORED BY YERERE. HIS OFFERS TO THE US AND THE UK TO REOPEN THEIR EMBASSIES IN KAMPALA SHOULD BE SEEN, IN FROEWIS' VIEW, IN THIS LIGHT.

6. SOVIET INFLUENCE CONTINUES UNABATED IN UGANDA. THERE ARE 200-300 SOVIET ADVISORS IN THE COUNTRY. IN ADDITION TO THE 25 MIGS PROVIDED THE UGANDAN AIR FORCE, SOVIET TECHNICIANS CONTROL UGANDAN AIR SPACE AND AN UNKNOWN NUMBER OF UGANDAN STUDENTS ARE IN THE SOVIET UNION FOR TRAINING. WHILE FROEWIS KNEW OF NO INCIDENTS BETWEEN SOVIET AND UGANDAN PERSONNEL, RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS ARE SOMETIMES FRAUGHT WITH DIFFICULTY. THE SOVIETS, IN FROEWIS' VIEW, ARE OFTEN "TOO ROUGH" WITH THEIR UGANDAN COLLEAGUES.

7. FROEWIS NOTED THAT THE FRG HAD BECOME UGANDA'S SECOND LARGEST TRADING PARTNER. IN ADDITION, THE FRG (PRIMARILY BECAUSE NO ONE ELSE IS PROVIDING MUCH ALTERNATES WITH THE SOVIET UNION FOR THE TITLE OF LARGEST AID DONOR. HOWEVER, THE LAST FRG CREDIT TO UGANDA WAS GRANTED IN 1974 FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SALT FACTORY WHICH WILL BEGIN PRODUCTION BEFORE THE END OF 1978. FROEWIS SAID HE WAS NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO THE COMPLETION OF THE FACTORY SINCE HE FEARED THAT AMIN WOULD REALIZE THAT IT MARKED THE PHASING OUT OF GERMAN AID AND GERMAN INFLUENCE WOULD DECLINE ACCORDINGLY.

8. FROEWIS HOPED TO MAINTAIN THE ILLUSION THAT AID WOULD CONTINUE, BECAUSE, AS HE PUT IT, "I DEPEND ON AMIN'S GOODWILL IN CASE OF TROUBLE INVOLVING CONFIDENTIAL

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CITIZENS OF THE FRG OR THE US." THE FRG HAS NOT, HOWEVER, INITIATED ANY NEW AID PROGRAMS SINCE 1974 NOR ARE THERE PLANS TO DO SO AT THE PRESENT TIME. NONETHELESS, FROEWIS HOPED THAT SOME AID, WHETHER FROM EC OR BILATERAL SOURCES, WOULD BECOME AVAILABLE WITHIN THE NEXT YEAR. THIS WOULD AGAIN PERMIT HIM TO SAY THAT HE REPRESENTED A SOURCE OF AID FOR AMIN.

9. FROEWIS EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH THE FUNCTIONING OF US-FRG ADMINISTRATIVE AND COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS. HE NOTED THAT THERE MIGHT BE SOME UTILITY IN A DIRECT CABLE RELAY BETWEEN KAMPALA AND THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, THOUGH THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT WORKED QUITE WELL AND HE WOULD NOT FORMALLY PROPOSE IT BE CHANGED.

10. WE THANKED FROEWIS ON BEHALF OF OURSELVES, THE EMBASSY AND THE DEPARTMENT FOR HIS ASSISTANCE DURING THE PAST YEAR. WE NOTED THAT THIS SERVICE WAS APPRECIATED AT EVERY LEVEL OF THE USG AND CERTAINLY BY AMERICAN CITIZENS RESIDENT IN UGANDA. MEEHAN

UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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